

Introduction

by Edward P. Radford*

This is the first of a series of annual symposia planned by the Center for Environmental Epidemiology of the University of Pittsburgh. The Center is under the sponsorship of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, and it is appropriate that this first symposium will address the issue of epidemiologic studies as a scientific basis for environmental policy-making.

The value of studies carried out on human populations in defining risks to the public health has become recognized, particularly in the last decade or so, and methods being employed to improve these studies are evolving rapidly. A number of the papers address these new method-

ological approaches, especially related to detection of effects of chronic exposures to hazardous agents in low concentrations. In addition, the relationship of evidence obtained from studies of this kind to policy-making and environmental regulation is also evolving, and some of the papers explore this process.

There is little doubt that steps being taken to regulate environmental exposures to the general public and to workers may require major economic and social changes in the future. It is clear that such regulation should be based on firm evidence that the public health will be benefited in significant ways by the proposed measures. The science of epidemiology will increasingly be called upon to provide that evidence, and the papers at this symposium are an indication of the response of the scientific community to that challenge.

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